

we do that, redeem the promise of the global economy and strengthen our own Nation for a new century.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12 p.m. in the David Rockefeller Room at the Council on Foreign Relations Building. In his remarks, he referred to Peter G. Peterson, chairman of the board, Council on Foreign Relations, and his wife, Joan Ganz-Cooney; Richard C. Holbrooke, U.S. Ambassador-designate to the United Nations; David Rockefeller, honorary chairman, and Leslie H. Gelb, president, Council on Foreign Relations; Prime Minister Yevgeniy Primakov and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; Minister of Finance Kiichi Miyazawa and Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan; James D. Wolfensohn, president, World Bank; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy.

Remarks at a Unity '98 Luncheon in New York City

September 14, 1998

Thank you very much, all of you, for your warm welcome. Thank you, Denise, for having us here today and for sticking up for our party and for doing the work you have done in your daughter's memory and for being a true friend to Hillary and me. We are so grateful to you.

I want to thank Patti and Natalie for that unusual and perfectly wonderful version of "Over the Rainbow." One of the best things about being President is just being able to meet people that you've listened to sing or perform all your life, and then all of a sudden you get to know them and then they do things like that, which are great gifts.

I'd like to thank Steve Grossman, who has been heroic in his work for our party. He is indefatigable, and he's effective, and he's a good man. And I'm very grateful to him for his leadership.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here—I look forward to saying to Mr. Rangel, "Chairman Rangel"—to Nancy Pelosi, to Carolyn Kilpatrick. Dick Gephardt just had to leave and has done a terrific job of holding our caucus together and working on things together. I thank Tom Daschle and Bob Torricelli and Senator Kerrey, who just

had to leave. He said he was going back to cast an agriculture vote. And I said, "How are you going to vote?" He said, "I'm from Nebraska," he said, "Whatever it is, I'm going back to vote for the farmers." [Laughter] And I appreciate his being here, and I appreciate Bob Torricelli's unbelievable work to help in this project. And I am very grateful for Tom Daschle's leadership in the Senate.

You know, last Friday Hillary and I had a lot of people down to the White House from New York—they weren't all from New York, but a lot of them were—when we had a celebration for Irish-Americans, for the progress that's been made in the Irish peace process. And I was thinking about what it was that our involvement there had to do with what we've tried to do at home. I was thinking about all the times that Hillary has been to Northern Ireland on her own to help women's groups who, predictably, even when the men's were still acting like fools, were out there working across religious lines to create a peace climate.

And I was thinking that there's something about the roots that we feel to Ireland—just as the roots we feel in the Middle East, the roots we feel in the Aegean, the roots we feel every place there are troubles in the world—that bring home to the heart both the cause of peace abroad and the cause of prosperity at home.

I was looking at the Vice President talking today and thinking, I don't know if every American knows this, but every American should know, that whether you agree with what we have done or not, there is no question that far and away, beyond anyone who has ever served in that position before, Al Gore has had more influence over more issues and done more good than any Vice President in the history of the country, by light-years, for ordinary people. And I think that is important. And I am very grateful to him and to Tipper for her work on behalf of mental health, for all the things that we've been able to do together.

And let me say to all of you, I'm also—I know that I speak for Hillary when I say we thank you for your personal friendship and your support. It means more now than ever, and we'll never forget it.

I was trying to think—you know, everybody has gone through the issues here and the record—I was trying to think of some way to say in a sentence what our administration has tried to be about and why there are all those people out there on the street today, when a lot of other people have told them they shouldn't be there. And we were turning around the corner and Hillary said, "Look, look, look at that person there." And there was a guy standing there holding the book that Al Gore and I wrote for the '92 campaign. Remember what the title was? "Putting People First."

This is a season when we will ask ourselves what is the purpose of our public life, what is the role of citizenship in the electoral process, and when we'll decide whether we're going to put progress over partisanship and people over politics. And I don't think there is any question what most Americans want to do.

What I want you to know is the importance of your being here today is that you have given us a chance to do certain very important, specific things, which I will mention before I let you go, but in a larger sense to reaffirm the fact that the special thing about our party is when we gather in a fundraising event like this, we want to do a lot of things that will benefit people who could never afford to come here. And I think that's very, very important.

For so many people, politics is about power. For me, the power of politics is that it gives you a chance to use the authority that comes from the people in a democracy to help the people that were on the street out here clapping when I was driving to this place. And in the end, no country does well—no country does well—unless those folks do well. It never happens.

Let me just say, I also believe that we have one message we have to take to all the folks on the street that obviously didn't deter our fundraising event here—the adversity of the moment, I think, has led us to this record turnout. Why? Because people made a decision, and they thought they were needed and they stood up. That's not the real danger to the Democrats this November. The real danger to the Democrats this November is that

history will repeat itself, complicated by good times.

What am I talking about? If you go back to the Civil War, there has never been an election for midterm—congressional election—since the Civil War when the party of the President in power, if the President was in his second term, didn't lose seats. Not a single time. I think we're going to beat history.

But what is the real danger? The real danger is the folks on the street will think, "Well, we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years and the lowest inflation rate in 32 years and the first balanced budget in 29 years, the lowest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years—things are peachy-keen, I think I'll go to the movie on Tuesday. Or I'll take my kid to the day-care center, and I don't have time to go vote." That is the real danger.

The real danger is that people will think, as they typically do, our voters, who have to make a bigger effort to go vote because they have more family responsibilities, more work responsibilities, on average, lower incomes and more hassles in life, that things are going well and they don't need to go vote. That is the danger; don't misunderstand.

Once people understand there's an issue, they show up. That's what the success of this incredible day is testimony to, where the people that sponsor this event wound up turning people away, and we raised 25 percent more than we expected to. Once people know what's at stake, they will show up. The real danger is that people will say things are going well, "there's no need for my voting. I don't really know that anything too bad is going to happen one way or the other or anything too good is going to happen one way or the other. But things are going well, and I'm satisfied."

It is our job to go out and tell people what is still at issue—not to take credit for what has happened. People already know what our role has been, I think, in all the things that the Vice President talked about. But to say, hey, there's a—yes, things are going well, but read the paper; look at all the things that are going on around the world; look at how things are changing every day. Remember, when things are at trouble around the world,

it can affect us here at home. So we have to look at these big issues.

And because the balanced budget is here and because we have a strong economy and because we have confidence in ourselves again, we have an obligation to deal with the big issues; to give every kid in this country a world-class education; to prove we can grow the economy and preserve our environment; to not squander this surplus until we have dealt with the fact that when the baby boomers retire there will only be two people working for every one person retired. And it is wrong for my generation to retire and undermine the standard of living of our children and grandchildren to pay for our retirement.

That's why we've got to save Social Security before we start spending this surplus in a politically popular election-year tax cut. That is wrong. We should not be doing that until we—first of all, it hasn't materialized yet. I'm just sitting around here like a—I haven't felt like this since the week before Chelsea was born. On October 1st, for the first time in 29 years, the ink will turn from red to black, and there are already people who don't want us to get to look at it. I'd say, let's just take a deep breath, realize the surplus, and say we're not going to spend it even if it's popular to do so, until we've saved Social Security and relieved our children and grandchildren from the burden of our retirement. I think it's important.

These are big issues. Today I spoke here in New York at the Council on Foreign Relations about the present crisis in the global economy. One quarter of the world is having negative economic growth. Thirty percent of our growth as Americans in the last 5 years has come from our expanding trade. We cannot forever be an island of prosperity if the rest of the world gets in trouble.

That's why people in every State and every community in this country ought to care about how folks in other countries are doing and whether we are working together with them. So I went to the Council on Foreign Relations to say, look, here's what I want to do to try to deal with the challenges of the global economy. Let me say very briefly. We have to, first of all, restore growth. That's what got us a balanced budget and 16 million

new jobs; we had a growing economy. That's what we need in the world.

The second thing we've got to do is to try to develop a system that limits these violent swings in how these countries are doing. You know, after the Great Depression in America we learned how to limit the swings of the economy, and we haven't had another depression. And it stabilized things. We have to do that in the world.

The third thing we've got to do is to make the global economy more humane. We have to make it work for ordinary people. And when times are tough and countries have to go through difficult times, we've got to help the innocent and make sure they don't get punished too badly. Otherwise, the support for free markets and democracy will erode.

So I talked about that today, and I gave out a big plan that I really have worked hard on. And I pointed out that the Secretary of Treasury, Bob Rubin, and the head of our central bank, Alan Greenspan, our Federal Reserve, within the next 30 days are going to convene 22 countries, their counterparts in 22 countries, and make recommendations to us about what to do over the long run to fix the global financial system.

Today in London, the heads of the big industrial powers just issued a statement at 1:30 saying they essentially supported what we were trying to do and would be a part of it. This is a big deal. This is what the politics of America ought to be about now. If we can't keep the economy growing globally, it's going to be very hard to keep it impacting Main Street in a positive way. So that's what this is about.

Just one or two other issues. This health care issue is a huge deal. We've got 160 million Americans, more than half the people in this country, in managed care plans. They have a right to know that if they get hit down here walking across the street, they can go to the nearest emergency room; they won't have to be dragged to another borough to an emergency room because their plan says that. They have a right to know that if they get cancer or they're horribly scarred and they need a specialist to help them, they can get a specialist to deal with their problem. They have a right to know that if their employer changes health insurance carriers in

the middle of a treatment—during a pregnancy, during a chemotherapy treatment, or whatever—they won't be required to change doctors. They have a right to know that their records will be private.

This is 160 million people. And we and our Republican friends in Washington are at direct loggerheads over this, something that affects 160 million people. That's the kind of thing this election is all about.

So what I want you to do is to know, number one, you have done a very good thing making this weekend possible—this event possible, because you are going to give us a chance to tell the people what putting people first means in terms of 1998. But number two, I ask you to go back to your homes, go back to your friends and neighbors, and keep talking until you're blue in the face. Remember, our problem is not adversity; we will rise in adversity. Our problem is complacency. Our problem is the burden of history. Our problem is people thinking, "Things are good now; I don't have to move." We do have to move.

And if we talk about these big things and we remember these elections are never about us—they're always about those folks out on the street; they're always about what putting people first means; they're always about freedom and opportunity and reconciling Americans to each other across all the lines that divide us—if we do that, we're going to do just fine.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon host Denise Rich; and Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee.

Statement on the Death of George C. Wallace

September 14, 1998

Hillary and I offer our condolences to the family and friends of George Wallace. I remember working with him at the Governors' conference in 1983. Governor Wallace was wheelchair-bound and often in great pain, but he rolled into the committee room to provide the crucial vote that enabled the

Governors to help save Federal support for disabled Americans unable to work.

Like the State he served as Governor and the region he represented as a candidate for President, George Wallace made a painful—but essential—journey, abandoning, in the end, the politics of division and embracing the politics of inclusion and reconciliation. For that, all Americans can be grateful.

Statement on Government Use of Recycled Products

September 14, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign an Executive order strengthening Federal efforts to protect the environment and promote economic growth through the purchase of recycled and other environmentally preferable products.

As the Nation's largest paper purchaser, the Federal Government has a special responsibility to lead the way in building markets for recycled goods. Since 1993, when I signed an earlier Executive order to promote recycling, we have quadrupled our purchase of recycled-content paper. Today we are going the next step. I am directing agencies to ensure that as of January 1 they purchase only recycled paper. Through this single action, we will save up to half a million trees a year, reduce air and water pollution, and curb emissions that contribute to global warming. We will also harness our tremendous purchasing power to spur the growing market for recycled products.

To further promote the use of environmentally preferable products, this "Greening the Government" Executive order also directs agencies to establish recycling targets, encourages them to purchase biobased and other "green" products, and creates a White House task force to oversee Federal recycling efforts.

Recycling is one of America's great environmental success stories. Across the country, families and businesses each day demonstrate their commitment to our environment through the simple act of recycling. By redoubling our efforts to "green the Government," we are demonstrating once again that the environment and the economy go hand